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NSC BRIEFING

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TOP COMMAND CHANGES IN THE SOUTH KOREAN ARMY

- I. Command changes in the South Korean army have aroused some interest because of Rhee's renewed threat to attack the Chinese.
 - A. General Chong Il-kwon appointed South Korean Army Chief of Staff on 14 February. Concurrently, General Paik Sun-yop appointed to command First Field Army.
 - B. This move planned by Rhee since last September and had been approved by General Taylor.
- II. Establishment of unified tactical command is sound military doctrine.
 - A. Removes from C/S the burden of direct command over the front-line troops.
- III. Viewed in conjunction with overall South Korean objectives, it has some added significance.
 - A. It adds another element to the command structure and may eventually decrease the UN Command's ability to control the South Korean military establishment.
 - B. It may reflect Rhee's eagerness to gain tactical, if not strategic, control of his army.

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- C. It reflects Rhee's growing feeling of competence to handle all South Korean affairs independently of US/UN control, and may be the first step in an eventual withdrawal from the UNC.
 - D. Ambassador Briggs reports it will also enlarge possibilities for Rhee to follow his "divide and rule" tactics among the military factions.
- IV. Both men involved, however, are opposed to an independent northward march.
- A. Paik long regarded the C/S post as onerous and entailing political responsibilities he neither understood nor aspired to shoulder.
 - B. Chong, who was C/S in 1951, is an intelligent, highly respected, capable officer who enjoys unparalleled support among the army factions.
- V. Chong has reportedly stated on several occasions he would not obey a northward attack order, and stated he would seek to influence Rhee against it.
- A. He wants the US to make flexible plans covering the possibility of Rhee's death and a coup d'etat.
 - B. He has political ambitions, and is politically knowledgeable. He may increase the army's involvement in domestic politics.
 - C. The influential "Manchurian officers' clique" which he heads has extensive affiliations among pro-Rhee politicians.

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D. American military officers, who found Paik manageable and obedient, are less certain about Chong. He tends to become involved in policy matters in seeking personal advantages.

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